convertible on current account; cautious and gradual approach towards liberalisation of capital account; an active participation in the deliberations on new International Financial Architecture and in G-20.

Expulsion of diplomats by India and Pakistan

1562. SHRI ABANI ROY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have recently expelled Pakistani diplomats and in retaliations the Pakistan has also expelled Indian diplomats there;

(b) if so, whether the expulsion of diplomats by both the countries have strained further relations; and

(c) if so, Government's reaction on such expulsions?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) to (c) On 18.2.2000, Pakistan was asked to withdraw Mr. Mohammad Khalil, Mr. Rana Mohammad Saghir and Mr. Muhammad Amin, staff members at Pakistan High Commission, New Delhi by 25.2.2000 as they were found to be indulging in activities incompatible with their official status. These officials left India within the stipulated time period. In retaliation and on false and baseless allegations, Pakistan sought the withdrawal of S/Shri Gopal Chander Roy, Asit Baran Das and R.Sankaranarayanan, staff mbembers at Indian High Commission in Islamabad, by 27.2.2000. These officials have returned to India.

The continuing harassment and intimidation of the personnel of our Mission in Islamabad, of which these retaliatory expulsions were a part, are contrary to all accepted norms of conduct towards accredited Mission personnel. Such conduct is naturally not conducive to improving bilateral relations between the two countries.

Lifting of trade control regime by United States

1563. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the United States propose to lift-certain trade control regimes/ technological blockades, including dual sue technology that were imposed on India since the Pokharan nuclear test;

(b) if so, the details thereof and by when these are likely to be lifted; and

(c) if not, whether these issues are likely to be raised during the forthcoming President Clinton's India visit for the sake of qulitative improvment in Indo-US relations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) and (b) In partial exercise of the waiver authority under the Defence Appropriations Act 2000, the US lifted restrictions on 27th October 1999, on US EXIM Bank, OPIC and TDA activities; International Military Education and Training Programme (IMET); the lending by US Banks to the Government of India; credit and financial assistance by Department of Agriculture to support the purchase of food; and, certain assistance for Wild Life Conservation and Environmental Projects On 15th December, the US also announced removal of 51 organisations from the list of over 200 Indian Government organisations, research institutions, public sector units and private companies — the so called the Entities List published in November 1998 — which were subjected to tighter export restrictions.

The US continues to maintain restrictions with regard to nonhumanitarian lending by International Financial Institutions and on export of defence-related and dual use goods and technology.

The US has not indicated the time frame for lifting the remaining restrictions.

(c) Both sides agree that the forthcoming visit of President Clinton to India provides an opportunity to pave the way for a qualitatively new and closer relationship. The two sides will discuss all issues of mutual concerns, including US restrictions against India. It has been Government's consistent view that all unilateral restrictions against India are counter-productive and should be completely lifted.

Pending applications for passports

1564. SHRI ANANTA SETHI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to refer to answer to Unstarred Question 1566 given in the Rajya Sabha on 16th December, 1999 and state:

(a) the position with regard to the issue of passport and the number of applications in every passport office pending at present; and

(b) the details of the steps taken to clear these applications?